

Medical News

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OSHA Begins Fax-on-Demand Service For Immediate Information

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently implemented a fax-on-demand service offering immediate information and copies of key documents. OSHA Fax offers more than 200 brief documents for a telephone charge of \$1.50 per minute.

Operated for OSHA by the US Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service, the fax-on-demand database includes agency news releases (updated daily), fact sheets, publication listings, information on the US Department of Labor's electronic bulletin board, OSHA office listings, inspection statistics, and other information.

When callers dial (900) 5553400, they will hear a menu offering options. Two documents may be obtained per call. Most OSHA materials also are available by mail from OSHA Publications, Room N3101, 200 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20210.

FROM: US Department of Labor/OSHA News Release; March 2, 1995.

Active TB May Independently Accelerate Course of HIV Infection

Studies suggest that HIV-infected patients have an incidence rate of active TB between 3.1 and 7.9 cases per 100 person-years. In active TB, patients with HIV infection have reduced survival rates compared to individuals without HIV infections. However, in HIV patients, the effect of active TB on survival and HIV disease progression has not been determined precisely.

Dr. Christopher Whalen and colleagues at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, recently reported a study that found that active TB may be not only an independent marker of advanced immunosuppression in HIV-infected patients but also may act as a cofactor to accelerate the clinical course of HIV infection.

In a retrospective cohort study, Dr. Whalen compared survival and incidence rates of opportunistic infection in HIV-infected patients with active TB with a matched group of HIV-infected patients without TB, but with a similar level of immunosuppression, as measured by the absolute CD4 lymphocyte count.

The incidence rates of new AIDS-defining opportunistic infections in cases was 4.0 infections per 100 person-months, compared with 2.8 infections per 100 person-months in control subjects. Patients with HIV infection and active TB had a shorter overall survival when compared to a group of matched cohort of patients with HIV infection without TB, even when controlling for age, intravenous drug use, previ-

ous opportunistic infection, baseline CD4 count, and antiretroviral therapy.

This study provides further support for the need to reduce risk of TB infection in individuals with HIV infection.

FROM: Whalen C, Horsburg R, Horns D, et al. Accelerated course of human immunodeficiency virus infection after tuberculosis. *Am J Resp Crit Cure Med.* 1995;151:129-135.

New Brochure for the Public Emphasizes Handwashing

To educate the public about the link between handwashing and infection prevention, the Council on Family Health and the National Association of School Nurses have embarked on a public service campaign, "Wash Your Hands for Good Health." A brochure published by the council, *Stop Germs in Their Tracks-Wash Your Hands*, includes reminders to wash hands before preparing a meal or feeding a child and after nose blowing. For a single copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the Council on Family Health, PO. Box 307, Coventry, CT 06236, or call (212) 598-3617.

Proposed Requirements for Meat and Poultry Designed to Curb Foodborne Illness

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced a proposal that would require meat and poultry processing plants to test randomly for *Salmonella*, mandate temperature requirements, and require written sanitation plans. These proposed rules would change the current system that is based mainly on sight, touch, and smell to one that is based on a more scientific analysis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 9,000 deaths per year are related to foodborne illness.

The USDA's acting undersecretary for food safety said, "These proposals are targeted to improve the safety of meat and poultry products by directly addressing the pathogenic microorganisms that cause most food-related illness and by increasing our ability to ensure that all meat and poultry companies follow sound safety procedures."

Industry groups are concerned about the USDA's proposal because of cost, estimated at \$733 million over 3 years. However, estimates for medical care and lost work time attributed to foodborne illnesses range from \$900 million to \$3.7 billion per year according to the USDA.

FROM: API-IA. USDA accepting comments on proposed requirements for meat, poultry, processing plants. *The Nation's Health.* March 1995, p. 8.